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Remarks and Resolutions

Commemorative of

the Hon. Josiah Quincy, LL.D.

By the American Antiquarian Society

At the First Meeting after his Death

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# REMARKS AND RESOLUTIONS

COMMEMORATIVE OF

THE HON. JOSIAH QUINCY, LL.D.

BY THE

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American Antiquarian Society  
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AT THEIR FIRST MEETING AFTER HIS DEATH.

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Worcester, Massachusetts.

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THE President, as requested by the Society, transmitted a copy of the resolutions, relating to the late Hon. JOSIAH QUINCY, LL.D., to his son, Hon. Josiah Quincy, with the following letter:—

HALL OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY,  
Worcester, Oct. 26, 1864.

MY DEAR SIR,— I have the highest satisfaction in performing the honorable duty imposed on me by the American Antiquarian Society in that part of the proceedings of their meeting on the 21st instant, copied below, which I beg that you will present to your family as an expression of affectionate and profound respect for your honored father, JOSIAH QUINCY, LL.D., and of just appreciation of his services and virtues, and of deep regret that the blessing of his life, made more precious by every added year, will be hereafter only enjoyed in its revered and instructive remembrance.

I also tender to your family the assurance of my personal sympathy in the private grief for which public honors are a cold alleviation, and into which a stranger may not intrude.

I have the honor to be most respectfully yours,

STEPHEN SALISBURY, *President.*

Hon. JOSIAH QUINCY, Boston, Mass.

## EXTRACT

FROM

THE "PROCEEDINGS" OF THE SOCIETY.

AT the Annual Meeting of the American Antiquarian Society, held at Worcester, on Friday, October 21, 1864, the following remarks, in behalf of the Council, were submitted by Mr. GEORGE LIVERMORE :—

At our last Annual Meeting, when we commemorated the completion of the first half-century of our existence as an association, we all listened with rare gratification to the letter of a venerable founder of the Society, whose interest in its welfare had continued from the first, and who had, during his life of more than ninety years, in various ways promoted the objects for which it was formed.

His great age, so far beyond the ordinary period of human life, forbade us to hope for a much longer continuance of his presence among us. When, therefore, on the first day of July last, the announcement of the decease of JOSIAH QUINCY was made, it created no surprise. The measure of his days, of his use-

fulness, and of his honors, was full. His life was completed.

The numerous other institutions with which he was connected have already paid their tribute to his worth; but, however they may have anticipated what might otherwise have been a fitting eulogium from the American Antiquarian Society, this does not deprive us of the pleasure, or absolve us from the duty, of recognizing his claims to honor as an Antiquary in the noblest sense.

The historical writings of Mr. Quincy entitle him to a high rank among the authors who have enriched this class of American literature. If he had left no other record of service to his country, his published works, from the importance of the subjects to which they relate, and the ability with which these are treated, and from the lofty principles those works illustrate and inculcate, would cause his name to be held in honorable remembrance.

That one whose time was so nearly engrossed by official duties should have been able to do so much and so well as an historian and a biographer, would surprise us, if we did not know that most of his literary productions were the natural outgrowth of his active life. Whenever called to any public service, he, like a true antiquarian, began by reverting to the past, and making himself thoroughly acquainted with whatever had preceded that had relation to the position he was to hold; and the investigations which he

made primarily for his own information and guidance, he published for the benefit of others.

His largest and most elaborate work, the History of "that University which was the very cradle of learning in these parts of the earth," is in its nature almost a treatise on the literary, ecclesiastical, and civil antiquities of New England. In that institution, founded amidst the toils and sufferings of the first settlers, were reflected, more clearly than almost anywhere else, their principles and purposes as well as their manners and customs. The minute details of their contributions and sacrifices for its support, in view of their circumstances and their object, are full of moral dignity; and the antiquary, in bringing to light such examples, becomes a most eloquent moral teacher.

Mr. Quincy was called to the Presidency of the University in 1829. There was hardly an institution in the country of greater interest than Harvard College, whose history from its beginning had been blended with whatever concerned the maintenance and advancement of sound learning and civil liberty in the American Colonies and the United States. But hitherto there were to be found only scattered notices of its origin, action, and influence, which awakened, but could not satisfy, the curiosity even of those who knew it best from having been nurtured in its bosom.

In 1833, was published the excellent, summary, though uncompleted and posthumous, volume of Mr. Peirce, the librarian of the University. But a full

History was still a desideratum. For more than a quarter of a century, a vote of the Corporation, requesting the President to prepare a History of the University, had stood upon the records of that Board. Mr. Quincy was not the man to shrink from any duty which his official position devolved upon him; and, having been specially invited by the Corporation to prepare a discourse to be delivered on the 8th of September, 1836, the second centennial anniversary of the foundation of the University, "in commemoration of that event, and of the founders and patrons of the Seminary," he not only performed the task then assigned him, but announced his purpose of preparing, as soon as it was practicable, the long-desired History of the institution.

What he began from a sense of duty, he continued with affectionate zeal till he completed the work, — an enduring monument to the founders and benefactors of his venerable *Alma Mater*.

When a new chapter shall be added by another hand, the history of the administration of President Quincy will not suffer by a comparison with that of any of his distinguished predecessors.

Before his removal to Cambridge, Mr. Quincy had already begun his "Municipal History of the Town and City of Boston during Two Centuries." This, like the History of the University, originated in his official position. His natural attachment to the town in which he was born had been strengthened by



repeated evidences of confidence and respect on the part of his fellow-citizens. He had been invested by them with the most important offices in their gift; he had been their representative in both branches of the State Legislature; and, for four successive terms of service, he had represented them in the Congress of the United States. It was as Judge of the Municipal Court of Boston, that he made the memorable decision, that the publication of truth with good intent is not a libel,—a decision which, though questioned and gravely censured at the time, has since become the settled rule of law.

Called from the bench to the chief magistracy of the City, he entered upon the administration of its affairs with that indomitable energy which ever distinguished his public life. The recent transition from a town to a city government had brought with it the necessity of important changes in old modes of proceeding, and of the establishment of new institutions. Here the wisdom and foresight, as well as energy, of Mr. Quincy were fully exercised; and he lived to see even those of his measures which at the time met with only partial approval, and others which encountered the strongest opposition, fully justified by a later public opinion.

At the request of the municipal authorities, he delivered “An Address to the Citizens of Boston on the 17th of September, 1830, the Close of the Second Century from the first Settlement of the City”; an elo-

quent commentary on its history, full of noble sentiments, and a model production of its kind. He gave, in a condensed form, the result of much antiquarian research into the manners and customs, laws and principles, of former generations; and he did not fail to enforce in the strongest terms the lessons they suggested.

The larger History of Boston, which, after a lapse of twenty years, was resumed, and was finished in February, 1852, at the close of the author's eightieth year, is mainly devoted to an account of the City government during the period of his mayoralty. In the preface he says: "It appeared to the author, that a *municipal* history of the Town, and an accurate account of the transactions in the first years of the City government, would be useful and interesting to the public in future times, and was due to the wisdom, fidelity, and disinterested services of his associates." In the naked record of his administration, we find the best eulogy on his own ability and his devotion to duty.

The "History of the Boston Athenæum," also, grew out of Mr. Quincy's relation to the institution and its founders and early patrons. They were his cherished friends. He was himself one of the original contributors to its fund. For several years he was its President.

When, in 1847, the corner-stone of the spacious and elegant edifice in Beacon Street was laid, he was requested to deliver an address on the occasion; and

was afterwards solicited to write out and extend his remarks for publication. The result was a volume of between three and four hundred pages, containing a documentary history of the Athenæum, followed by admirable biographical notices of its deceased founders. It was a labor of love to commemorate the services of that little band of "ingenuous scholars" who originated and established this institution, "dedicated to letters and the arts."

The biographical works of Mr. Quincy, no less than his Histories, were produced in response to some call of obvious duty.

Believing, to use his own words, that, "of all monuments raised to the memory of distinguished men, the most appropriate and least exceptionable are those whose foundations are laid in their own works, and which are constructed of materials supplied and wrought by their own labors," he prepared, from the papers bequeathed to him by his father, a Memoir of that illustrious patriot, which will continue to be read with the greatest interest and admiration, as long as the love of liberty is cherished, and the story of its apostles, defenders, and martyrs is welcomed.

The "Life of Major Samuel Shaw," prefixed to his "Journals," and prepared, at the request of the proprietor of them, by Mr. Quincy, the only surviving friend who could do him justice as a benefactor of his country, was undertaken, the author says, from no other motive than the gratification afforded by being

instrumental in perpetuating the memory of one whom he had known in his early youth, and of whom, after the lapse of fifty years, he "could truly say, that, in the course of a long life, he had never known an individual of a character more elevated and chivalric, acting according to a purer standard of morals, imbued with a higher sense of honor, and uniting more intimately the qualities of the gentleman, the soldier, the scholar, and the Christian."

Two of Mr. Quincy's biographical productions were written at the special request of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The brief but excellent "Memoir of James Grahame," author of the "History of the United States of North America," contains all that we know of that worthy man and faithful historian. Mr. Quincy had great respect for the moral purity and intellectual elevation of Mr. Grahame's character, and held his work in high estimation. He felt that it was "incumbent upon some American to do justice to the memory of a foreigner who had devoted the chief and choicest years of his life to writing a history of our country, with a labor, fidelity, and affectionate zeal for the American people and their institutions, which any native citizen may be proud to equal, and will find it difficult to surpass." This Memoir was first printed in the "Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society;" and was afterwards prefixed to a new edition of Mr. Grahame's History, as revised and enlarged by the author, and published, in this

country, after his death, under the auspices of his biographer.

In the eighty-seventh year of his age, Mr. Quincy completed and published his "Memoir of the Life of John Quincy Adams," — a fair volume of over four hundred pages. Connected by family ties, nearly his co-eval, and intimately acquainted with his private life as well as his public career, Mr. Quincy was peculiarly fitted to perform the task assigned him. It was, however, to Mr. Adams's public life that the biographer principally addressed himself. Besides the advantages derived from personal knowledge, and a recourse to his printed works, he was favored with access to copious authentic unpublished materials.

His "chief endeavor," as he says, was "to render him the expositor of his own motives, principles, and character, without fear or favor, in the spirit neither of criticism nor eulogy." He thus produced a work, which, whilst it partakes largely of the nature of an autobiography, constitutes also a most important chapter in the general history of the Republic.

If, at any time, a difference of opinion may have existed between the biographer and his subject on minor matters, they were indissolubly united in the sentiment of the grand avowal of Mr. Adams, inscribed under the portrait that adorns the volume: "I live in the faith and hope of the progressive advancement of Christian liberty, and expect to abide by the same in death."

The key-note of Mr. Quincy's public life, and of most of his writings, is found in that invocation which, in his father's last will and testament, follows a bequest, to the son, of the works of the great writers on free government: "May the spirit of liberty rest upon him!"

Inheriting the principles of this illustrious patriot, he consecrated his life, and all his powers, to their maintenance. Born when the sentiments of the Declaration of Independence were ripening into action, and living as a young man with those who made good the Declaration, and founded this Republic, he understood the difficulties that beset their path when they were called on to form a Constitution for the government of all the States. In common with the great body of the statesmen of that day, South as well as North, he felt that there must ever be an irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery.

An unfortunate delusion, fostered by the specious declarations and promises of a few members of the Federal Convention, who only ventured to ask for a temporary toleration of slavery, and averred, that, if let alone, they would willingly, in a short time, rid themselves of it, induced the framers of the Constitution to commit to the several States the general power of peaceful emancipation. Mr. Quincy always distrusted the sincerity of those members who seemed to him faithless to the principles of the Constitution in insisting upon this as a condition of its acceptance.



He knew that any compromise by which eternal principles are postponed to temporary policy, sooner or later, fails.

When, at last, this essential antagonism resulted in open violence that aimed to destroy the nation itself, and thus the Government became invested with the right, and placed under the obligation, to preserve the life of the nation at the expense of its mortal foe, Mr. Quincy thought he saw the hand of Providence opening a way, as righteous as it was necessary, for the extirpation of the evil.

His faith in the permanency of the Republic never faltered. He had none of the timidity or of the despondency which often accompanies extreme old age. "The victory of the United States in this war is inevitable," were his words but a few months before he died, addressed to the President of the United States, in a letter remarkable for its vigor and its clearness of statement. He looked for a speedy suppression of the Rebellion. He believed that his country would come out of this terrible conflict, purified and justified in the eyes of the world.

With devout gratitude for all the blessings which attended his long and eventful life, and with a firm faith in the goodness and mercy of his heavenly Father, our venerated associate passed to his eternal home.

Our chief purpose, on the present occasion, has been less to speak his eulogy, already elsewhere pronounced in a classic as well as in the vernacular tongue, than

to enrich our records with the enumeration of some of his merits as they are shown in those of his works that are intimately connected with our own objects as members of an American Antiquarian Society.

Ere long the marble statue and the granite column will arise to perpetuate his memory. But the erection of a still more enduring monument will be the noble task of the historian, who, to illustrate the spirit of the free institutions of our country, as exhibited in the character of one of her greatest citizens, shall portray the Life and Times of Josiah Quincy.

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The Hon. LEVI LINCOLN addressed the Society as follows : —

MR. PRESIDENT, — The Report of the Council, as is usual and becoming such occasions, makes mention of those melancholy providences, which, in the interval between our meetings, are continually removing from our association honored and beloved members of this Society by death. We are now reminded, in touching and appropriate terms, of the decease, since the last meeting, of one of the most distinguished of our number. The late Hon. Josiah Quincy was of the earliest, and, at the time of his death, was the oldest, of our associates. He was, eminently, a great and good man; and, I think, having regard to all considerations, the most *marked man of the century* among us. I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I failed, in connection with the proceedings of this meeting,



to express my entire sympathy in the notice of his death, and my most hearty concurrence in the tribute of respect paid to his memory, by the impressive language of the Report.

The courtesy and kindness of this venerable man placed me, *personally*, under many obligations. More than a half century since, I entered the Senate of Massachusetts, the youngest of its members. Mr. Quincy was among the seniors at the Board. It was at the period of the embargo and other obnoxious, restrictive measures of the Government, and on the very eve of the declaration of war against England. The spirit of party ran high; and there was bitterness of feeling, and often much acerbity of language, in debate. Differing widely, as we did, in political opinions, and opposed to each other in regard to public measures, I recollect from him, in my unpractised position, no instance of unfriendliness, no one word of unkindness. Through subsequent, successive years, in the discharge of arduous public duties, I was sustained and greatly cheered by expressions of his favorable regard, and not unfrequently became a delighted listener to his sagacious counsels, and a partaker of his elegant hospitalities. He will long be remembered by *others*, also, for the kindness of his heart; and his name be held in honor, by the country, for the brightness of its fame.

I beg leave to offer, for the consideration of this meeting, the following resolutions:—

“The impressive event of the decease of the late Hon. Josiah Quincy, LL.D., having occurred since the last meeting of this Society, it becomes his associates, on this first subsequent opportunity of their assembling, to give expression to their admiration of his elevated character,—their high appreciation of his eminent public services,—their testimonial to his protracted years of virtuous living, and to his active, enduring, and unceasing labors of distinguished usefulness to extreme old age. Therefore,—

“*Resolved*, That the American Antiquarian Society will ever hold the memory of their late associate, the Hon. Josiah Quincy, LL.D., in affectionate and honored regard, as the erudite scholar and liberal patron of science, the upright jurist, the patriotic statesman, the pure-minded and exemplary citizen, and the unselfish, enlightened, faithful, and devoted public servant; alike in all the relations of civil, social, and private life, firm in purpose, and true to principle and the loftiest conceptions of personal duty.

“*Resolved*, That in the death of President Quincy, while we lament that we shall meet him no more as an associate in our councils, whose mere presence would be a benediction, we bow, in reverent submission and gratitude, to that gracious Providence, which released him from the pains and infirmities of exhausted nature, and leaves his name and example as a precious memory in the hearts of contemporaries and posterity.

“*Resolved*, That the foregoing resolutions be entered upon the Records of the Society, and that the President be respectfully requested to transmit a certified copy thereof to the family of the deceased.”

These resolutions were unanimously adopted.

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